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THE FUTURE OF 4-H CLUB WORK

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A radio talk by Dr. C. B. Smith, Assistant Director of Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered through a network of 56 radio stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, Saturday, February 6, 1932.

Boys' and girls' 4-H club work is a part of the national agricultural extension system. It teaches rural youth something of the high lights of farming, home making, and rural life. It does this by having each boy and girl in the club do a piece of farm or home work in a better way. The work is so organized that in the doing of it the boys and girls themselves grow. That, after all, is the most significant thing about 4-H club work. It builds men and women, and it does it by giving them specific and worth-while things to do. They grow an acre or more of corn or cotton, raise a flock of poultry, produce a home garden and sell or can the surplus, raise a litter of pigs to maturity, feed the family in accordance with the principles of nutrition and health, keep records, make exhibits at the fairs and achievement days, explain the work to others, and do other like things all under technical guidance and in a workmanlike and challenging way.

All of these things in club work will be continued in the future, but more emphasis will be placed on doing each job still better, using not only the best skills and latest findings of science but also bringing to each task the philosophy and economics of agriculture.

It is intended that our future farmers shall produce not only skilfully but wisely. It is intended that 4-H club boys and girls shall know what the prospects are in farming if they take it up as a life work.

It is intended that 4-H club boys and girls shall know the need and value of cooperation with each other, of working intelligently with their neighbors in farming, of producing what the market wants, when it wants it and in the amount needed. So future 4-H club work will have more economics in it than has the past.

The future will see more opportunity for the farmer, to walk with his children in the fields and woods, there to learn more fully the ways of plants and soils, insects and birds, to observe clouds and sunset, to smell the soil and look up at the stars. These things are his by right of inheritance; but how often he has been cheated of his inheritance because he did not in his youth learn to see and hear and understand. Club work of the future will more fully give to its members a knowledge of these things.

Club work of the future will concern itself above all with building of homes, because real homes where parents and children can be together and work together and hope together are the most significant things in life. Farmers' don't make much money. They rarely found libraries or universities or hospitals, but they can build real homes where peace and joy and content are and wherein the safety of the nation lies.

And the beginning of a good home is a good table where parents and children meet three times a day and where the neighbor and occasional stranger

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find a seat. It doesn't take great wealth to supply the farmer's table, but out of his garden and dairy, his pastures and orchards, his barns and granaries come bread and meat, fruit and vegetables, honey and milk, eggs and poultry, all the things which make a table something to linger over, a table that prompts hospitality, friendliness, and good feeling.

4-H club work of the future will teach more fully the good living on the farm, the living that children and friends and the stranger within its gates remember and leave with regret. At such tables character is built and the virtues and amenities of life taught.

In concluding this talk, we would leave these thoughts in your mind, in relation to the future of 4-H club work. 4-H club work, with its 840,000 members and 60,000 leaders, has come as a permanent thing in rural America; and it will grow, this because it improves agriculture and home making, because it is character building in its results, because it gives vision to youth, because business men and educators believe in it, and because parents want this wholesome, stimulating, and challenging work for their children. Emphasis will continue on doing worth-while farm and home jobs in better ways, on the good living in rural life, on home building, on the economics of agriculture, on rural recreation, and on rural social life. 4-H club work is a significant leaven, working with youth for the building of a great rural America. Its face is toward the sun. It has a purpose. It is going on. It is a progressive thing to be a 4-H club member.